DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 182 641 CG 014 139

AUTHOR Upshur, Carole C.
TITLE The Youth Work Curriculum.
INSTITUTION Massachusetts Univ., Boston.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquent Prevention (Dept. of Justice), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE [79]
GRANT 77-JS-01002: 78-08-1136
NOTE 17p.: Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association (87th, New York, NY, September 1-5, 1979)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS College Majors: College Students: *Cooperative Education: *Curriculum Design: *Delinquency Prevention: Demonstration Projects: Higher Education: Professional Training: Program Descriptions: Program Development: *Skill Development: *Work Experience Programs: *Youth Programs

ABSTRACT

The youth work curriculum, developed as a special degree program at the College of Public and Community Service of the University of Massachusetts at Boston as part of a demonstration grant from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention to the Boston Teen Center Alliance is presented. The Youth Work Career Certificate (equivalent to a traditional "major"), designed to address the basic skills a direct service worker in a youth agency requires to be effective, including skills drawn from the knowledge base of a psychology curriculum with a developmental and clinical focus as well as skills in program planning, management and community organizing is described. The curriculum materials address the following 12 skills areas: (1) human development, (2) adolescent development, (3) juvenile law, (4) youth program planning, (5) street work, (6) group work, (7) assessment, (8) referral, (9) grant development, (10) staffing issues and problems, (11) fiscal management, and (12) community organizing. Evaluation results of the two-year-old program, showing a positive relationship between skills taught and usefulness on the job and improved skill levels and job effectiveness, are included. (Author)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"The Youth Work Curriculum"[1]

Carole C. Upshur

College of Public and Community Service

University of Massachusetts at Boston

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Carole C. Upshur

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

ED182641

CG 014139

The College of Public and Community Service was founded in 1972 as one of four components of the University of Massachusetts at Boston. It was to serve an adult population of students, focus on urban problems, and provide an innovative educational approach through a competency-based curriculum. The concept of competency-based education differs from a credit-based system in that students must demonstrate "competence" (i.e., meet a specific standard of performance of a skill) in order to obtain credit, rather than pass a certain number of courses. A total of 50 competencies must be obtained to earn the degree. These are organized into certificates addressing four major areas of learning: 1) reading, writing and math; 2) liberal arts (an interdisciplinary humanities and social science curriculum); 3) an independent interest (a student-initiated project carried out through a faculty sponsor); and 4) a career certificate or "major".

---

[1] The development of the Youth Work degree program was partially funded through grants number 77-JS-01002 and 78-08-1136 from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. The creation of the curriculum and the establishment and operation of the degree program resulted from the efforts of a number of College and Teen Center Alliance personnel including: Rodney Jackson, former Executive Director of the Teen Center Alliance, Bonnie Gorman and Steve Haddad, Alliance Board Members and Joseph Webber, Lorinda Gagnon and Lou Simon of the Alliance staff; John Strange, former Dean of the College; Barbara Buchanan, Director of Field Education for the College; Jean Luce, Youth Work Program Coordinator at the College; and Paul Rosenkrantz, Professor of Human Services. Particular thanks for help in putting together this paper are due to Lorinda Gagnon, Jean Luce and Barbara Buchanan.

Three career areas are offered at the College: 1) law; 2) community planning and management; and 3) human services. However, the College also develops specialized degree programs cooperating with community and government agencies, hospitals and mental health clinics to enable employees of these organizations to gain job related skills and work toward a B.A. degree. The B.A. in Youth Work was developed through a federal grant from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention to the Boston Teen Center Alliance. The unique aspects of the Youth Work degree include: 1) the competency-based curriculum; 2) the adaptability of the curriculum to agency needs; 3) the curriculum content; and 4) the success in providing an academic program directly relevant to job situations. Each of these issues will be further explored below.

Competency-Based Curriculum

While the 50 competencies required for a B.A. degree are roughly equivalent to 120 credit hours of college work, the way in which students complete a competency-based curriculum can be almost entirely outside of traditional classroom instruction. The key criteria for a competency-based curriculum is for the students to demonstrate that they can meet the requirements of a particular competency. Competency statements are provided for each area of the curriculum of the College. They specify in a brief statement what skill or knowledge must be demonstrated; what criteria and standards must be met; and give an example of how the student will be evaluated (e.g., a test, paper, observation, etc.). A sample competency statement for one of the career competencies in Youth Work is provided in Exhibit No. 1.

Students who feel they can meet the requirements of a competency when they enter the College, without additional instruction, arrange with a faculty

member in the appropriate Center (i.e., department) to provide evidence of their competence. This may involve a transcript from a college level course taken elsewhere; a paper or project written for their job or other college work; a letter and other back-up information from their supervisor from a current or previous job position. Students thus may obtain credit (i.e., competencies) for knowledge they have gained outside of traditional academic settings and prior to their enrollment at the College. In addition, students have the option of studying on their own, taking courses elsewhere, or using on the job training opportunities at any point in their progress

EXHIBIT NO. 1: Sample Competency Statement

COMPETENCY TITLE: INTERVENTIONS WITH GROUPS

RATIONALE: The ability to effect change with a small group requires a combination of knowledge and helping skills in different areas. Competent group facilitators must be able to identify and respond to individual needs within a group while simultaneously attending to and acting upon the processes of the group as a whole. Persons attempting to effect change with a group must thus have working knowledge of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and group dynamics. Further, they must utilize the same skills as persons working in helping relationships with individuals. Diagnostic and planning skills are required as well as the ability to assess the effects of interventions. Any helping persons, whether in an individual or group setting, should be able to identify and utilize a particular approach for facilitating change. And just as helpers working for change with an individual should be aware of their helping style, group facilitators should examine their intervention style and characteristics.

COMPETENCY: Can use a specific approach to effect change with a small group and can evaluate your effectiveness as a facilitator.

CRITERIA: Your demonstration will be evaluated on the following dimensions:

1. Diagnostic and planning skills.
2. Integration of your knowledge of group processes with your interventions.
3. Effectiveness of your interventions and the group's progress toward the stated goals.
4. Your analysis of your intervention style.
5. Consistent implementation of the particular approach being used.
6. Examination of your assumptions about how change occurs with a small group.
7. Analysis of why change did or did not occur.

EXHIBIT NO. 1 (cont.)

STANDARDS: Your demonstration requires:

1. Diagnosis, planning, and interventions should reflect the use of a particular model of change which is in harmony with both your personal style/values and the needs/values of group members.

2. Diagnosis and planning should reflect the data generated by the group members. You must submit a statement of the group's goals and objectives. The goal statements should include both short-term and long-range goals, and the goals must be related to implementation.

3. Diagnosis, planning, and interventions should relate to the stages of development of the group. Specific examples of your group's behavior should be used.

4. Intervention skills should reflect the following where they are consistent with the model of change being used:

    a. Climate-setting consistent with the goals and membership of the group.
    b. Facilitating participation of all group members.
    c. Appropriate use of feedback.
    d. Assistance in resolving conflicts.
    e. Identification of specific group issues.
    f. Ability to summarize, clarify, and provide closure.

5. Analysis of your intervention style which identifies characteristics of that style.

6. Your assessment of your effectiveness should include:

    a. Summary of feedback collected from group members.
    b. Analysis of your strengths and weaknesses.

CONDITIONS:

1. You may be a leader or member of a task group or helping group. You must fulfill the role of facilitator, formally or informally, for a minimum of eight weekly sessions or the equivalent. This means that you should have major responsibility for the conduct of sessions, including diagnosis, planning, and implementation, during this time period. Before attempting to demonstrate this competency, you should talk to a Center faculty member to ensure that your experience will be appropriate.

2. Feedback collected from group members must be gathered in a systematic manner. Forms are available from the Center.

3. If there is someone supervising your work with the group, you must submit the supervisor's evaluation of your effectiveness as a group facilitator.

METHOD OF EVALUATION: You will make an oral or written presentation of your intervention including feedback materials from participants and/or supervisor. In some cases direct demonstration may be possible.

through the College to acquire the skills to demonstrate competencies. They then must submit evidence that they can meet the criteria and standards of a particular competency.

Many students choose to pursue a more or less standard path of enrolling in courses to acquire the knowledge to demonstrate competencies. However, course enrollment alone is not enough to obtain credit. The student must meet the criteria and standards of each competency statement they choose to complete. In some instances the curriculum can thus be completed in two or three semesters by a student with a large amount of prior experience related to the curriculum and adequate reading and writing skills. Other students will take four or five years to complete the B.A.. The average is about three years.

In addition to the self-paced nature of the curriculum and the ability of students to utilize learning and work completed outside the College, the College allows students to write their own curriculum within the general parameters of the four major certificate requirements noted earlier. This allows students to pursue interests and obtain credit in academic areas not offered by the College. The College, for example, has faculty resources to teach only one foreign language, Spanish. Students wishing to demonstrate competence in another language may do so through obtaining sponsorship of a Spanish language faculty member. The student must draw up a plan for securing the required instruction (if needed) or demonstrating their competence through using an outside evaluator (academic or otherwise as long as deemed qualified by College faculty) who will verify that they meet the criteria and standards of the four foreign language competencies.

This provision for students creating their own curriculum is monitored by a College governance body called the Certificate Council which must approve such alternative "learning plans." The large majority of students do not

find a need to adapt the curriculum. Those who do wish to make changes, in most cases, follow the curriculum and demonstrate existing competencies in all areas except their career certificate. Here, in the career area, the College encourages flexibility so that students can gain skills they know will be directly related to their job needs. The flexibility in the career certificate also makes the College program attractive to community and government agencies who are looking for relevant in-service training opportunities for their employees.

College-Agency Agreements

Field education of some form has long been a part of degree programs in the professions. It was seen as a necessary element in learning to apply classroom information to the real world and to obtain proficiency in various skills required of the profession. Traditionally, field education is structured and controlled by the academic program. Students are identified as such and while some placements or internships approach a regular job situation, rarely does the student obtain a realistic notion of what practice will be once they are on their own and engaged in full-time professional work.[1]

The College of Public and Community Service has approached field work in a novel way. Although more traditional field placements and internships are provided, the college-agency agreement starts from the principle that there are a number of adults currently employed in human service positions who do not possess B.A. degrees and who would be interested in pursuing job-related educational goals while at the same time working toward a degree. Further, it is assumed that agency directors and boards will be interested in supporting the educational activities of their employees, given that a fairly direct

---

[1] See Alan Gartner: The Preparation of Human Service Professionals; Human Sciences Press, New York, 1976.

relationship will exist between the educational activities and skills required on the job. In fact, the College enhances the relationship between education and job skills by encouraging agencies to develop new competencies specifically related to the job positions of employees as part of the career certificate (i.e., major) completed by the employees. Interested and qualified supervisory staff at the agency are also encouraged to teach to the agency developed competencies or to other competencies in the College.

The College has developed seven such college-agency agreements during its first six years, involving close to 100 students or 14% of the total College's enrollment. These include three community mental health centers, an environmental health program, a city housing department, a high school, and the Teen Center Alliance. The essentials of an agreement include services and academic programming committed by the College on one hand, and resource and supervisory commitments by the agency on the other hand. Agencies are asked to grant release time to employees during the work week to attend classes (this ranges from three to ten hours a week). Where agency budgets allow, agencies are also requested to subsidize student tuitions through use of in-service training funds. In some cases funds also come from union contracts which provide for training funds to promote career mobility of para-professional staff. (Students receive from $40 to $170 per semester toward tuition and fees of approximately $300.) Further, agencies must designate an administrative liaison to the College and agree to aid in recruitment and selection of interested employees. A minimum of five employee-students is required to establish a college-agency agreement.

The Teen Center Alliance College-Agency Agreement is one of the most ambitious the College has undertaken. It involves a total of 25 students at a time in a full spectrum of educational activities including the pursuit

of a career certificate in Youth Work specifically designed by Teen Center staff and College faculty. Students receive half of their tuition and fees each semester and their agencies receive $200 each semester per student in order to pay for substitute staff coverage for six hours of release time during working hours which is granted to students to attend classes. In addition, a full-time coordinator-counselor for the academic program is provided and up to $10,000 per year of funds for seminars, conferences and instructional activities (such as tutoring and hiring of practicing youth workers and professionals to teach to competencies where expertise does not exist on the part of College faculty).

The program was initiated in January of 1978 through a grant from the U.S. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. The two-year grant was made to the Teen Center Alliance as part of a national demonstration project in delinquency prevention. A total of $1,000,000 was committed over two years. A large portion of the funding was allocated to local youth programs for direct service projects. However, the Teen Center Alliance, established in 1972 as a technical assistance and support service to a coalition of 35 Boston youth agencies, included in the grant proposal a significant component dedicated to up-grading skills of youth workers.

In the grant application, the Alliance noted that there are four major factors which prevent successful youth programming: "community support, adequate budgets, a variety of quality programs, and competent professional personnel."[1] In its seven-year history, the Alliance attempted to address these factors through developing standards of operation for youth agencies (made a requirement for membership); providing management seminars for youth

---

[1] p. 71, "Positive Youth Development Program," Boston Teen Center Alliance Grant Application, National Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, January 1977.

agency staffs; soliciting funds from foundations to provide a transportation pool for youth agencies; sponsoring coordinated fund-raising events for member agencies; and sponsoring a variety of programs among city teen centers to promote cooperation, racial understanding, and joint activities. The OJJDP grant made possible considerable expansion of such efforts, including the development of a degree program in Youth Work.

At the time that Alliance staff were writing their grant proposal they contacted the College of Public and Community Service to aid them in developing professional training in youth work because of their firm belief that this was a necessary element in improving the effectiveness of youth programs. Alliance staff noted that all too often persons become youth workers and administrators of youth programs because that is what is available at the time. Anyone with any degree of interest in youth is believed to be an adequate candidate for direct service jobs in youth work. Direct service workers who prove to have good rapport with kids and are able to run good programs are then put in administrative positions and asked to carry out tasks for which they have no training (e.g., bookkeeping, proposal writing, personnel supervision, planning). The College was asked to develop a degree program which would not only address some basic direct service skills of youth workers, but which would also prepare them for administrative roles they inevitably must play in small, understaffed agencies.

The Curriculum

Students participating in the B.A. program in Youth Work must complete the standard College requirements for the degree. However, because of the tuition support and release time they receive from their jobs, they are required to complete the prescribed Youth Work Career Certificate (i.e., major) rather than having the choices and options of students who attend school without such a

direct relationship to their employment situation. In addition, the Alliance and the College set out a schedule for completion of the twelve Youth Work competencies during the two-year duration of the grant which covered three semesters and two summer sessions. (This was later extended due to extensions of the initial grant period and refunding for a third year.) The Youth Work Certificate was thus to be completed by students prior to completion of many of their other degree requirements, however students were free to complete as much of the remainder of the curriculum as they could during the time they were participating in the College-Agency Agreement.

The Youth Work Certificate includes twelve competencies designed to provide skills in individual casework and group work; in understanding the psychological dimensions of youth development and behavior; in dealing with the legal aspects of youth work including the juvenile justice system, the schools, and public service agencies; and in the planning and management aspects of youth work. The interdisciplinary nature ofthe curriculum is seen as crucial since a youth worker must often play multiple roles: counselor; change agent; educator; planner; manager; family therapist; community organizer. The youth worker is often working alone and is frequently the only helping person immediately accessible to inner city youth and families in crisis.

The twelve competencies, in the order in which students were encouraged to complete them, are:

1. Human Development: This competency is designed to acquaint students with the basic principles of development over the life span and major theories of human development. Understanding of physical, social, cognitive and emotional aspects of development are to be demonstrated by the student as well as the relationships of heredity and environment and the process of sex-role identity development of self-concept. This competency already existed in the College curriculum as a standard requirement for students completing a Career Certificate in Human Services.

2. Juvenile Law: This competency was specifically designed for the needs of youth workers, although once created it can be utilized

by any student in the College. It requires demonstration of skill in identifying appropriate legal and administrative strategies to aid a particular youth in need of help, including knowledge of juvenile justice, special education, child abuse and status offender statutes and the agencies responsible for providing services in each case.

3. Youth Program Planning: Again, this competency was designed specifically for the Youth Work curriculum. It requires demonstration by the student of the basic principles of planning adequate youth programs including use of needs assessment, setting objectives, knowledge of other similar programs, monitoring and control systems, and program evaluation.

4. Street Work: An existing Human Services competency, "Interventions with Individuals," is the basis for demonstration of the ability of the youth worker to contact and institute change on a one to one basis with youth in informal settings. Students must use actual situations in which they demonstrate the ability to assess a youth's problems; consider the ethical issues involved in intervention; plan an intervention strategy; record progress; make a critical appraisal of the effort; and make a final evaluation.

5. Adolescent Development: Again an existing Human Services competency, "Life Stages," is utilized. However, Youth Work students were required to complete the work on adolescence, whereas other students can choose any major developmental stage. This competency requires an in-depth knowledge of a particular stage of development and is demonstrated through use of case histories or actual clients with whom students have worked. The student must describe the major developmental issues of adolescence and how they are exhibitied by a particular case. There must be an understanding of the relationships among the various aspects of development (physical, cognitive, and social) and demonstration of knowledge of various theoretical models of behavior and development.

6. and 7. Assessment and Referral: While these two are existing competencies in the Human Services curriculum called "Collecting and Reporting Information," Youth Work students are required to conduct interviews and write case reports for adolescents rather than having the choice of any type of client. Teaching resources designed to prepare Youth Work students for this competency are specifically focused on techniques to be used with adolescents, whereas regular courses at the College addressing these competencies are directed more towards general principles of interviewing of adults. The Assessment competency requires students to demonstrate skills in observation and interviewing of clients including identifying the goals of a particular interview; appropriate interpretation of verbal and non-verbal responses of the client; ability to control the direction of the interview, solicit relevant information, and terminate the interview; and self-evaluation of one's skill in carrying out the interview. Tapes of actual interviews must be submitted by students for evaluation by faculty. The Referral competency requires the student to demonstrate skill in writing a case report

based on observation and interviews of clients. The case report must be well organized; provide background information as well as the current status of the client; include appropriate inferences made by the writer concerning the clients' situations; and include treatment recommendations.

8. Group Work: This competency, again part of the College's Human Services curriculum, requires demonstration of ability in leading youth groups (other students have a choice as to what age or client group is chosen). The youth worker must apply diagnostic and planning skills, show knowledge of group work theory, collect and analyze feedback from group members and evaluate their role as facilitators. The competency can only be demonstrated through actual group situations in which the student participates.

9. Grant Development: This competency is part of the Community Agency Management curriculum of the College (a sub-category of the Community Planning Certificate). It requires students to write a grant proposal (for youth workers the proposal must be for a youth program) and to research possible funding sources including foundations and state and federal sources.

10. Personnel Practices: Again this competency is from the Community Agency Management curriculum of the College. Students must draft personnel policies applicable to youth programs to complete this competency as well as design a decision-making system and a system for supervision and evaluation of staff.

11. Financial Records: This is the third competency selected from the Community Agency Management curriculum. Students must demonstrate knowledge of basic bookkeeping, financial reporting, and financial controls for small agencies.

12. Action Organizing: The last competency of the Youth Work Certificate is drawn from the Community Planning curriculum of the College and requires students to participate in a community organizing effort around youth issues. In addition, the student must be able to describe the organizing strategy utilized and evaluate its success.

Evaluation

An evaluation designed to determine the relevance of the youth work curriculum to the job situations of students and its success in up-grading skills of youth workers is in the process of being completed. Some preliminary data has been collected, however, and the results have been encouraging. A total of 33 students have been enrolled in the Teen Center Alliance-College of Public and Community Service program in the past three semesters. Turnover

in the interview that their writing of case reports had improved dute to the skills learned in the program. Students who answered affirmatively to the more general question about using skills gaind in the program noted that they: passed on new information about youth legal issues to youth they worked with; felt more self-assured in working with youth; and felt better able to obtain desired results in transactions with their own administrators and with other agencies.

Youth work supervisors (including two agency directors) were asked which of the twelve Youth Work competencies were"essential - should be required" and "not essential - should be optional." They were also asked to reflect on any changes in skill levels they observed in employees who were also students in the program. The Grant Development competency followed closely by Personnel Practices and Financial Management were seen by over 50% of the supervisors as "not essential" for youth workers. Since the workers themselves did not have such a negative view of these areas of the curriculum (although clearly ranking them as less important than the direct service skills) it appears that the supervisors (who probably see themselves as responsible for these areas rather than their employees) may be projecting relevance to current roles of their employees while the employee-students are looking towards future roles. No specific feedback could be obtained about observations of changes in skill levels of employees but general comments indicated that supervisors feel the curriculum is having a positive effect on the employee-student.

Only one student has obtained the complete Youth Work Certificate at this point in time. Four other students are 60-75% through the curriculum. The data reported here are thus only preliminary results complied after three semesters of the program. While considerable support for the initial 12 competency curriculum package has been indicated, it should be noted that due to the request of a few students, two of the management competencies (management competencies are: Youth Program Planning, Financial Management, Personnel Practices and Grant Development)

in participants has occurred due to the inherent instability in the youth work field. Some students lost youth work jobs due to loss of funding in their agenc ies. Several students accepted higher paying jobs outside of the human services field, including one as a city bus driver (at a starting salary of $18,000) and one as a private helicopter pilot for executives of a large local computer corportation.

In structured interviews conducted with ten students and six youth work super.isors the basic soundness of the curriculum was reiterated and the relevance and usefulness to on the job activities supported. The competencies seen as most relevant currently and most frequently directly utilized by students were Group Work, Assessment and Referral. On a rating scale of one to six asking students to indicate the relevance of each competency to their current work situation (six bein g the strongest relationship) only one competency (Financial Management) received an av erage ranking of less than five. The competency most noted by students as having not been used on the job (indicated by three students) was the first in the Certificate, Human Development, but only one student thought they would not have use for the Human Development competency at some future point.

Students were also asked how they felt participation in the program would affect their employment potential and if they have implemented specific changes in their on the job behavior due to the curriculum. Ninety percent of the students reported they felt their employment potential has been or will be improved. Reasons cited include improved credibility both among peers and to potential employers; increased ability and understanding of a variety of different problems and issues improving their confidence in being able to handle different work situations; and increased informal networks through association with other employed students concerning the availab ility of jobs. While a disappointing 40% reported that they had made specific changes in dealing with clients, agencies or other staff due to the curriculum, 80% also reported later

have been made optional rather than required. An additional "management" competency has been added, that of program evaluation, and students now may choose two from the five available. This allows students who are interested in more direct service expertise the option to pursue additional Human Services competencies rather than complete the original curriculum plan.

REFERENCES

1. Cedrone, Loretta, ed. Student Handbook for Assessment, College of Public and Community Service, University of Massachusetts at Boston; Boston, MA 1977.

2. Boston Teen Center Alliance, "Positive Youth Development Program," Grant Application to the National Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, January 1977.

3. Gartner, Alan. The Preparation of Human Service Professionals. Human Services Press, New York 1976.